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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/975,968	10/15/2001	Rikio Shiba	862.C2245	1046

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EXAMINER

FISCHER, ANDREW J

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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3627

DATE MAILED: 02/13/2004

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/975,968

Applicant(s)

SHIBA ET AL.

Examiner

Andrew J. Fischer

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --
Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE ____ MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 12 January 2004.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1,3,4,41 and 54-58 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) ____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) ____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1,3,4,41 and 54-58 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) ____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) ____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on ____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☒ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☒ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☒ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. ____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date ____.
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. ____.
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: ____.

DETAILED ACTION

Continued Examination Under 37 CFR 1.114

1. A request for continued examination (“RCE”) under 37 C.F.R. §1.114, including the fee set forth in 37 C.F.R. §1.17(e), was filed in this application after final rejection. Since this application is eligible for continued examination under 37 C.F.R. §1.114, and the fee set forth in 37 C.F.R. §1.17(e) has been timely paid, the finality of the previous Office action (in Paper No. 15) has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.114.

Acknowledgments

2. In accordance with the RCE noted above, the after final amendment (Paper No. 16) has been entered. Accordingly, claims 1, 3, 4, 41, and 54-58 remain pending.
3. This Office Action is written in OACS. Because of this, the Examiner is unable to control formatting, paragraph numbering, font, spelling, line spacing, and/or other word processing issues. The Examiner sincerely apologizes for these errors.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

4. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

(e) the invention was described in (1) an application for patent, published under section 122(b), by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent or (2) a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent, except that an international application filed under the treaty defined in section 351(a) shall have the effects for purposes of this subsection of an application filed in the United States only if the international application designated the United States and was published under Article 21(2) of such treaty in the English language.

5. Claims 1, 3, 4, and 58 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Rogers et. al. (U.S. 5,978,774)(“Rogers”). Rogers disclose transmitting input screens containing data files to a terminal for display allowing a user to input data to order and return the consumable; transmitting the display data (inherent); a return rate indicating ratio of quantities returned consumable to quantities shipped (inherent since the system tracks both the quantity of shipped consumables to returned consumables).
6. Claims 1, 3, 4, 41, and 54-58 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being clearly anticipated by Okazawa (U.S. 2002/0002492 A1).

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

7. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

8. Claims 1, 3, 4, and 58 are alternatively rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Rogers.¹ It is the Examiner’s principle position that the claims are anticipated because of the inherencies noted above.

However if not inherent, it would have been obvious to a person having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify Rogers to include the ratio. Such ratios are common for statistical reporting purposes.

9. Claims 41 and 54-57 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Rogers in view of Hastings et. al. (U.S. 5,978,774)(“Hasting”). Rogers discloses as discussed above but does not directly disclose incentive points. Incentive points are old and well known in the art. For example, Hastings teaches incentive points for returning a product. For example, the user in Hastings may only have a set amount of videos rented out at one time (e.g. 3). By returning a video, the user receives one incentive point and thus gets another video mailed out to them. The quicker the customer returns the product, the quicker the next product is mailed to the customer.

Therefore it would have been obvious to a person having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify Rogers as taught by Hastings and include incentive points for returning the product. In other words, allow the user to have a certain amount of products out at one time. Such a modification would have provided an incentive for customers to more efficiently return their products.

10. For due process purposes, the Examiner again confirms that Applicants have decided not to be their own lexicographer by indicating and defining claim limitations to have meanings other than their ordinary and accustomed meanings. To support this position, the Examiner again notes the following factual findings as first expounded in the previous Office Actions.² First, the Examiner has again carefully reviewed the specification and prosecution history and can not locate any lexicographic definition(s). Second, the Examiner finds that not only have Applicants

¹ See MPEP §2112 expressly authorizing alternative §102/§103 rejections when the question of inherency is present in the anticipation rejection.

² See the office actions mailed March 26, 2003, Paper No. 12, Paragraph No. 14; and the Office Action mailed September 10, 2003, Paper No. 15, Paragraph No. 13.

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not pointed to definitional statements in their specification or prosecution history, Applicants have also not pointed to a term or terms in a claim with which to draw in those statements.³ Third, after receiving express notice of the Examiner's position that lexicography is *not* invoked⁴ Applicants first response did not point out the "supposed errors" in the Examiner's position regarding lexicography invocation in accordance with 37 C.F.R. §1.111(b) (i.e. Applicants did not argue lexicography *was* invoked). Forth and to be sure of Applicants' intent, the Examiner also notes that Applicants have declined the Examiner's express invitation⁵ to be their own lexicographer. Finally, after receiving express notice of the preceding factual findings and conclusions, Applicants' latest response again fails to point out the supposed errors in the Examiner's position regarding lexicography invocation in accordance with 37 C.F.R. §1.111(b).

Moreover, Applicants' latest response—while fully considered by the Examiner—does not change the Examiner's conclusion that Applicants have decided not to be their own lexicographer. Therefore (and unless expressly noted otherwise by the Examiner), the heavy presumption in favor of the ordinary and accustomed meaning for claim terminology is confirmed. Accordingly, the claims continue to be interpreted with their "broadest reasonable interpretation," *In re Morris*, 127 F.3d 1048, 1054, 44 USPQ2d 1023, 1027 (Fed. Cir. 1997) and the Examiner continues to rely heavily and extensively on this interpretation.

³ "In order to overcome this heavy presumption in favor of the ordinary meaning of claim language, it is clear that a party wishing to use statements in the written description to confine or otherwise affect a patent's scope must, *at the very least*, point to a term or terms in the claim with which to draw in those statements. [Emphasis added.]" *Johnson Worldwide Assocs. v. Zebco Corp.*, 175 F.3d 985, 989, 50 USPQ2d 1607, 1610 (Fed. Cir. 1999).

⁴ See again the Examiner's initial Office Action on the merits, Paper No. 12, Paragraph No. 14.

⁵ *Id.*

Response to Arguments

11. Applicants' arguments with respect to claims have been considered but are moot in view of the new grounds of rejection.

Conclusion

12. The following references are pertinent to Applicants' disclosure: Mongilio (U.S. 6,463,437 B1); Tsunenari et. al. (U.S. 2002/0013744 A1); Sato et. al. (U.S. 2002/0002480), *ad*

13. The following two (2) citations to the Manual of Patent Examining Procedure ("MPEP") apply to this Office Action: MPEP citations to Chapters 200, 700, 1800, and 2100 are from the MPEP 8th Edition, Rev 1, February 2003. All remaining MPEP citations are from MPEP 8th Edition, August 2000.

14. In accordance with the USPTO's goals of customer service, compact prosecution, and reduction of cycle time, the Examiner has made every effort to clarify his position regarding claim interpretation and any rejections or objections in this application. Furthermore, the Examiner has again provided Applicants with notice—for due process purposes—of his position regarding his factual determinations and legal conclusions. The Examiner notes and thanks Applicants for their "Remarks" (Paper No. 16 beginning on page 6) traversing the Examiner's positions on various points. If Applicants disagree with any additional factual determination or legal conclusion made by the Examiner in this Office Action whether expressly stated or implied,⁶ the Examiner respectfully reminds Applicants to properly traverse the Examiner's position(s) in accordance with 37 C.F.R. §1.111(b) in his next properly filed response. By

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addressing these issues now, matters where the Examiner and Applicants agree can be eliminated allowing the Examiner and Applicants to focus on areas of disagreement (if any) with the goal towards allowance in the shortest possible time. If Applicants have any questions regarding the Examiner's positions or have other questions regarding this communication or even previous communications, Applicants are strongly encouraged to contact Examiner Andrew J. Fischer whose telephone number is (703) 305-0292. If attempts to reach the Examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the Examiner's immediate supervisor, Robert Olszewski, can be reached at (703) 308-5183. The fax number for facsimile responses is now (703) 872-9306.

Andrew J. Fischer
Patent Examiner
Art Unit 3627

AJF
February 7, 2004

⁶ *E.g.*, if the Examiner rejected a claim under '103 with two references, although not directly stated, it is the Examiner's implied position that the references are analogous art.